

Message Text

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APPROVED BY NEA/ARN - MR. KORN

EB/CBA/OCA - MR. O'CONNOR

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 226674

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, SY

SUBJECT: EXPLOSION AT NATIONAL CASH REGISTER OFFICE,
DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO

REF: DAMASCUS 2297

1. DEPARTMENT (NEA/ARN) WAS TELEPHONED OCT. 15 BY MR. ANDREW S. GILLAN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF NATIONAL CASH REGISTER COMPANY, REGARDING THE BOMBINGS OF NCR OFFICES IN DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO. GILLAN SAID NCR IS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT BOMBINGS AND LOSSES IT HAS SUFFERED THEREFROM, PARTICULARLY IN ALEPPO, HE SAID, WHERE CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT READY FOR DELIVERY WAS DESTROYED. AS A RESULT, GILLAN SAID, NCR IS CURRENTLY CONSIDERING WHETHER TO MAINTAIN ITS OFFICES IN SYRIA.
2. GILLAN SAID THAT AS HE UNDERSTANDS IT NCR INSURANCE WITH SYRIAN GOVERNMENT INSURANCE COMPANY DOES NOT PROTECT COMPANY'S OFFICES AGAINST DAMAGES ARISING OUT OF INSURRECTION OR TERRORISM, BUT DOES COVER ACCIDENTAL OCCURRENCES. GILLAN NOTED THAT WHILE SARG HAS PRIVATELY ADMITTED TO NCR REP FROM ATHENS WHO WAS DESPATCHED TO DAMASCUS THAT INCIDENTS IN DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO WERE RESULT OF BOMBINGS,
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PUBLICLY SARG HAS MAINTAINED THAT DESTRUCTION WAS CAUSED

BY GAS EXPLOSIONS. GILLAN SAID THIS PRESUMABLY WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR NCR TO RECEIVE COMPENSATION, BUT HE WAS NOT

CLEAR WHAT SYRIAN INSURANCE COMPANY WOULD DO WHEN FACED WITH QUESTION OF MAKING DETERMINATION. GILLAN SAID WHETHER NCR IS COMPENSATED BY SYRIAN INSURANCE COMPANY WOULD BE A MAJOR CONSIDERATION IN ITS DELIBERATIONS ABOUT STAYING IN OR WITHDRAWING FROM SYRIA. FYI. HE CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT IF COMPENSATION COULD BE OBTAINED, NCR WOULD NOT CLOSE ITS OFFICES IN SYRIA. END FYI.

3. GILLAN ASKED IF DEPARTMENT HAD HEARD ANYTHING ON THIS FROM EMBASSY DAMASCUS, AND IF NOT WHETHER DEPARTMENT COULD GIVE NCR SOME INDICATION AS TO SYRIAN GOVERNMENT'S STANCE RE COMPENSATION. DEPARTMENT OFFICER SAID WHILE DEPARTMENT HAD HAD NO WORD ON COMPENSATION, AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY STAFF HAD DISCUSSED BOMBINGS WITH SENIOR SYRIAN OFFICIALS AND HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT NCR AND OTHER AMERICAN COMPANIES WOULD RECEIVE FULL PROTECTION. GILLAN SAID NCR WOULD, OF COURSE, NOT WANT TO PULL OUT OF SYRIA WITHOUT FIRST CHECKING USG'S VIEWS. DEPARTMENT OFFICER SAID WE BELIEVE PROMISING NEW ERA OF ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION NOW OPENING BETWEEN U.S. AND SYRIA, AND WE ARE ENCOURAGING AMERICAN FIRMS TO LOOK INTO BUSINESS POSSIBILITIES WITH SYRIA; ACCORDINGLY WE WOULD HOPE THAT FIRM SUCH AS NCR WHICH HAS KEPT ITS OFFICES IN SYRIA THROUGH MOST DIFFICULT PERIOD OF US/SYRIAN RELATIONS WOULD NOT NOW DECIDE TO WITHDRAW.

4. WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING EMBASSY COULD GIVE US FOR GILLAN REGARDING NCR'S POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING COMPENSATION EITHER FROM SYRIAN GOVERNMENT INSURANCE COMPANY OR SARG ITSELF FOR DAMAGES TO DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO OFFICES. KISSINGER

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